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UM INSTITUTE RELEASES PRELIMINARY 2000 TRAVEL FACTS

MISSOULA —

Visitors to Montana spent about \$1.64 billion in the state last year, according to preliminary figures from the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at The University of Montana.

ITRR researchers estimate that Montana hosted 9.37 million visitors in 2000 – about the same as 1999. The average group size last year was 2.4 individuals, and visitors came to the state in 3.88 million groups.

ITRR estimates that 49 percent of nonresident visitors were on vacation, 22 percent were visiting friends and family, 11 percent were business travelers, 9 percent were just passing through and 9 percent came for shopping, conventions or other reasons.

Where did nonresident visitors spend their money? Researchers estimate that 26.1 percent (\$427 million) went to food, 24.1 percent (\$395 million) went to retail sales, 22.2 percent (\$363.9 million) went to gas, 17.2 percent (\$282.2 million) went to lodging, and 10.4 percent (\$170 million) went to transportation and other purchases. Visitors injected \$72 million into state gas tax coffers.

Montana's travel-industry payroll is \$395 million annually, and 25,800 jobs in the state

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are directly supported by nonresident travel. Between 1992 and 2000, expenditures by visitors to Montana grew from \$1.43 billion to \$1.64 billion (in 2000 dollars). During the same span, nonresident visitation to the state grew 15 percent from 8.18 million travelers to 9.37 million.

For more information, contract ITRR's Thale Dillon at (406) 243-5107 or visit the Web site at www.forestry.umt.edu/itrr.

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